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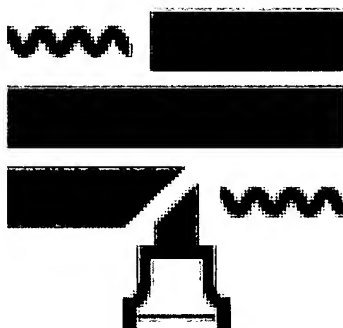
# Publications Review Board

"Helping You Honor the Oath"

## (U) "Can You Declassify My Document?": Information Review De-mystified

Posted on **February 9, 2015**

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(U) Here at the PRB we often get a lot of questions about declassification and document release. Our main business is taking classified information out of documents, after all. Contrary to popular belief, the PRB does not actually "declassify" documents. The Agency conducts a wide variety of information review & release activities, only one of which is prepublication review. Below is a quick & dirty guide to the main types of information review & release.

Declassification

Downgrading

Sanitization

Public Release

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## Prepublication Review

### (U) Declassification

(U) "The authorized change in the status of information from classified information to unclassified information."

(U//~~FOUO~~) Declassification authority is defined in Executive Order 13526 and 32 CFR 2001. It lies with the original classification authority (OCA) or other officials, as designated. Here at CIA, IMS's Information Review & Release Group is the hub for declassification activities. Multiple IRRG offices manage various declassification activities (yes, there are different kinds!). These fall into a few main categories:

- *Automatic (often referred to as "25 Year")* – Depending on the classification of a document, information becomes automatically declassified after a certain period of time following its creation – usually 25, 50, or 75 years (this is the date you see in classification blocks). The CIA Declassification Center (CDC) conducts reviews on material approaching its automatic declassification date to ensure that information still needing protection beyond this date remains classified.
- *Systematic* – Information exempted from automatic declassification is systematically reviewed to determine if it still requires protection or can be released. This is the main responsibility of the Information Review Division (IRD).
- *Executive Order Mandatory* – Per EO 13526, anyone can request that certain information be reviewed for declassification (though a request does not guarantee something will be declassified). The Public Information Program Division (PIPD) manages these requests.
- *Discretionary* – The Agency also declassifies information when the public interest in disclosure outweighs the need for classification. A prominent example of discretionary declassification are the releases of document collections coordinated by the Historical Program Coordinator (HPC). You can check out most of them [here](#) (or access them from home at [CIA.gov](http://CIA.gov)). Read more about the work of HPC at their [blog](#).

### (U) Downgrading

(U) "A determination by a declassification authority that information classified and safeguarded at a specified level shall be classified and safeguarded at a lower level."

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(U) So, e.g., downgrading a piece of information marked S//NF would change the classification to C//NF. Like declassification, downgrading is done by a designated authority. Prepublication review does not involve downgrading information.

**(U//~~FOUO~~) Sanitization**

(U) “The process of editing or otherwise altering classified intelligence information or reports to protect sensitive intelligence sources and methods, capabilities, and analytical procedures in order to permit additional dissemination without declassifying the information or reports.”

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PRB does not sanitize documents; rather, we remove the classified information from the documents to ensure they are unclassified.

**(U) Public Release**

(U) “Approval for public release of information created in whole or in part (co-authored) by CIA intended for unrestricted distribution, regardless of the medium by which it will be released (e.g., written, voice, or electronic), that discusses operations, business practices, or other information related to the CIA, the IC, or national security.”

(U//~~FOUO~~) The Office of Public Affairs ensures all official CIA public releases convey the appropriate CIA messaging, are accurate in content, and appropriate for public release as official CIA communications. OPA is responsible for all official CIA releases to the media and postings on the official CIA public website. The PRB does not have the authority to make such releases.

**(U) Prepublication Review**

(U) “The review and approval of nonofficial (personal) or official (work-directed) material (written, oral, or electronic) intended for ‘publication’ (the sharing of information with others) that mentions CIA, intelligence data or activities, or material on any subject about which the author had access to classified information in the course of their employment or other contact with the Agency.”

(U//~~FOUO~~) Prepublication review is the responsibility of the PRB, as governed by AR13-10. The purpose of prepublication review is to ensure that information damaging to national security is not disclosed inadvertently; and, for current employees and contractors, to ensure that neither the author’s performance of duties, the Agency’s

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mission, nor the foreign relations or security of the U.S. are adversely affected by publication.

(U) Still can't keep it all straight? Feel free to discuss in the comments below or contact us.

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